

REMARKS

The claims have been amended to call for selectively removing the hard mask. The selective removal of the hard mask is described in the specification at page 5, lines 11-17.

No such steps are shown in any of the cited references. For example, the cited reference '530 to Lee teaches a CMP process which would not be a selective etch process. See Lee at column 4, lines 12-18. Similarly, Wang teaches a polishing process. It is not believed that any corresponding etch is described in the other Lee patent.

Therefore, claim 1, as amended, should patentably distinguish over the art.

On the same analysis, claim 14 should also distinguish.

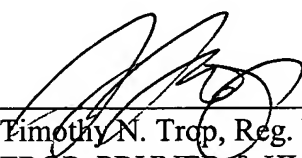
New claims 25-28 are dependent claims and are supported by the same material in the specification at page 5, cited above.

The objection to the absence of numeral 20 in the figures is noted, but 20a and 20b are shown in the figures and 20a and 20b are collectively item 20.

In view of these remarks, the application should now be in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE DRAWINGS

Figures 1, 2, and 3 have been amended as indicated in red in the attached annotated marked-up drawings. A replacement sheet of Figures 1, 2, and 3 is also attached.

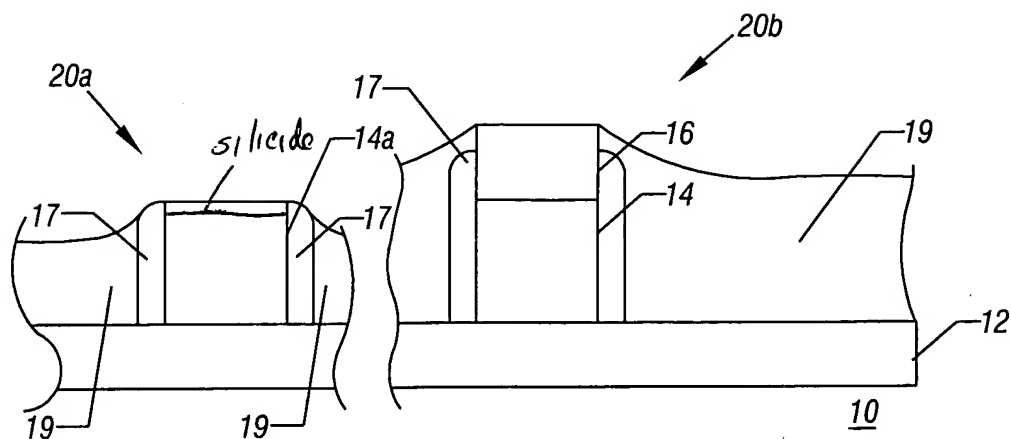


FIG. 1

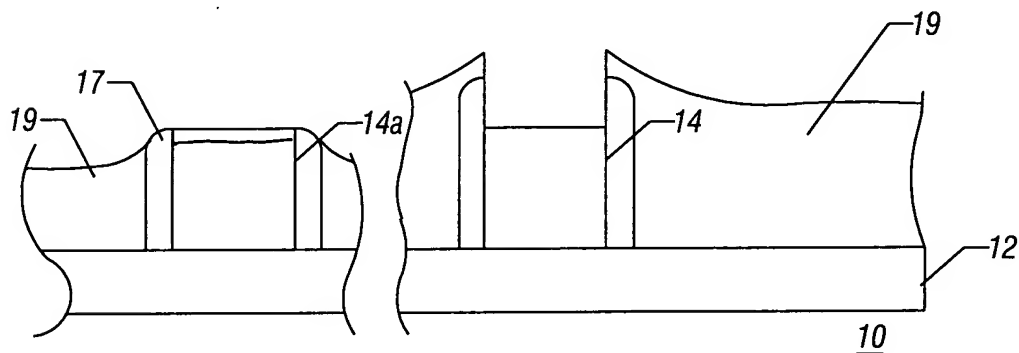


FIG. 2

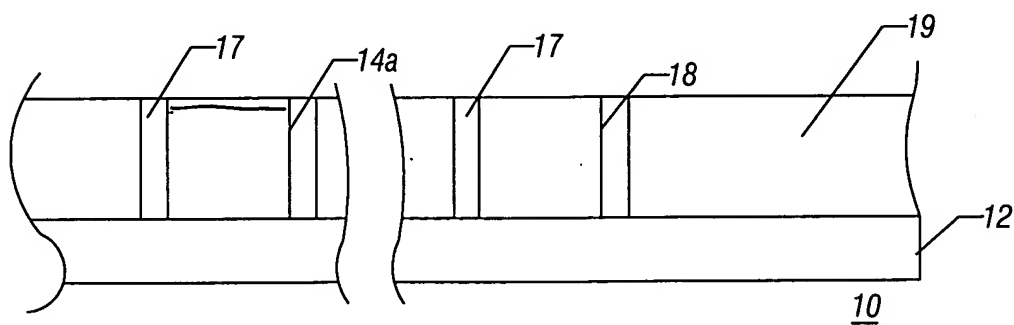


FIG. 3